

VZCZCXRO6408
PP RUEHBI
DE RUEHLM #0279 0701233
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 111233Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9560
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1428
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 8423
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 6648
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 4771
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2765
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 4743
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3843
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 9066
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 6393
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO 0943
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3300
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

UNCLAS COLOMBO 000279

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: SUICIDE BOMBING AT SOUTHERN MOSQUE KILLS 14; ONE MINISTER SERIOUSLY WOUNDED

¶1. A presumed LTTE suicide bomb attack killed at least 14 and injured 36 at celebrations for the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed on March 10 at 10:15 am. The explosion at the Godapitiya Mosque in Akuressa, 15 km inland from the principal southern coastal town of Matara and about 160 km south of Colombo, occurred while several government ministers were walking into the mosque with a crowd of devotees.

¶2. Minister of Telecommunications (and Special Projects) Mahinda Wijesekera suffered serious head injuries. He was treated at Matara hospital and then airlifted to Colombo where he underwent four hours of surgery. He was taken off life support today and has reportedly regained consciousness. Principal Government Spokesman (and Cultural Affairs Minister) Mahinda Yapa Abeywardene was also injured. Former Chief Minister of the Southern Province H.G. Sirisena was airlifted to Colombo General Hospital, along with his son Manoj. Six members of local councils, all members of the President's Sri Lanka Freedom Party, were also among the injured.

¶3. Other VIPs who were attending, but were not injured, were former Minister of Petroleum A. H. M. Fowzie, Deputy Minister for Housing and Construction Chandrasiri Gajadeera and Deputy Minister of Buddhist Affairs Pandu Bandaranaike.

¶4. Earlier on March 10 President Mahinda Rajapaksa, in a message on the birth of the Holy Prophet Mohammed said, "The Muslims of Sri Lanka will have greater joy in these celebrations this year as they come after the establishment of democracy in the Eastern Province, and the fast approaching liberation of the North too from the clutches of terrorism." In a statement after the blast, the government said the attack reaffirms that the LTTE is a ruthless terrorist organization that has no regard or respect for religion.

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